

# Best Practice Update

## Workforce Investment Act

This Update provides information on the legislation which replaced the former JTPA (summer youth program) and describes new employment opportunities for students with disabilities.

# Transition

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) is a broad overhaul of the U.S. job-training system. It strives to streamline dozens of individual training programs so everyone has easier access to services, especially groups who face serious barriers in seeking and gaining employment, such as youth and adults with disabilities.

The centerpiece of the WIA is a system of one-stop workforce centers designed to provide job training, education, and employment services at a single neighborhood location dependant upon factors of population. A key idea behind WIA is that every individual, including people with disabilities, has the right to access basic or "core" services that include:

- Skill assessment services;
- Information on employment and training opportunities; and
- Unemployment services, such as job search and placement assistance and up-to-date information on job vacancies.

One of the goals of WIA is to provide all jobseekers easy access to services that will help them find jobs and advance their careers, while also meeting employer workforce needs. The Workforce Investment Act serves as the umbrella for 19 employment related programs, one of which is Vocational Rehabilitation.

Workforce development is a public-private partnership lead by the North Dakota Workforce Development Council, a 25-member advisory body appointed by the Governor. The Council has developed the state's first strategic five-year workforce development plan with a heavy emphasis on high- skill, high-wage, high-growth, primary-sector industries. This workforce strategy is tied closely to the state's economic development strategy of targeted industries and investments.

(<http://www.state.nd.us/wia/docs/ndwia.pdf>)

Formerly referred to as the JTPA (Job Training Partnership Act), Summer Youth Programs, the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Youth Employment and Training Program provide youth with a broad range of year-round (as opposed to former summer only programs) coordinated services in both public and private sector settings.

**The Purpose of the WIA Youth Program is to:**

- Provide improved youth programs, linked more closely to local labor market needs and community youth programs, with strong connections between academic and occupational learning.
- Provide youth seeking assistance in academic and employment success with:
  - Options for improved educational and skill competencies;
  - Connections to employers;
  - Programs that promote youth development and citizenship;
  - Leadership development through voluntary community service opportunities;
  - Adult mentoring;
  - Training opportunities; and
  - Targeted opportunities for youth living in high poverty areas.

**What Kinds of Services are Available for Transition-Age Youth?**

Youth activities are provided to low-income youth. To be eligible, low-income youth ages 14-21 must also fit one or more of the following challenges to successful employment:

- high school dropout.
- someone with basic literacy skill needs.
- homeless, runaway, or foster child.
- pregnant mother or a parent.
- offender.
- someone who needs help in completing an educational program or securing and holding a job.

At least 30 percent of the funds for youth programs must be spent on out-of-school youth. Five percent of funds for youth activities can be used for youth who are not low-income but meet a specific category, such as individuals with disabilities. For youth with disabilities, only their own income, not their family's, is considered in determining whether they meet income criteria. Youth who meet the income eligibility criteria for receiving cash payments under any federal, state, or local public assistance program (such as SSI benefits from Social Security) are eligible for youth services.

As a result of the federal requirements to address how the state will meet the needs of youth with disabilities, ND must have a youth council to coordinate youth programs and activities that link them to local labor market needs. WIA requires assessments, preparation for postsecondary educational opportunities or unsubsidized employment (as appropriate), links between academic and occupational training, and links to the job market and employers.

Required support services include tutoring, study skills training, instruction leading to high school completion (including dropout prevention), alternative school services, adult mentoring, paid and unpaid work experiences (including internships and job shadowing), occupational skills training, leadership development opportunities, follow-up services for not less than 12 months as appropriate, and comprehensive guidance and counseling.

Whether a young person is eligible for services or not, one-stop workforce centers can serve as information and referral sources. The WIA encourages youth to make use of these services early in their development and to use the system as an entry point for obtaining education, training, and job search services.

As a resource for the transition process, one-stop workforce centers can:

- assist students with job searches by providing job listings, helping with resume development, teaching interview skills.
- provide information on training and education options in the local area.
- provide information and access to experiential employment activities.
- provide instruction on conducting a job search.

### **Who is Eligible?**

Any individual is eligible for core services, including job search and placement assistance, labor market information, initial assessment of skills and needs, information about available services, and some follow-up services to retain jobs. Intensive services for unemployed people who are not able to find jobs through core services alone will also be available. These include more comprehensive assessments, individual employment plans, group or individual counseling, case management, and short-term prevocational services.

### **Activities that the Youth Employment and Training Program Provide are:**

- Tutoring, study skills training, and instruction leading to secondary school completion;
- Alternative secondary school offerings;
- Employment opportunities directly linked to academic and occupational learning;
- Paid and unpaid work experiences, internships, and job shadowing;
- Occupational skill training;
- Leadership development opportunities;
- Adult mentoring; and
- Comprehensive guidance and counseling.

As an educator, if you believe a student with disabilities can benefit from pre-employment or placement skills or assistance as identified above, contact any of the Job Service office sites listed in Appendix A.

**APPENDIX A**  
**Directory of Job Service North Dakota Offices**

**Beulah**

119 E Main  
Beulah ND 58523  
Phone: 701-873-5607  
Toll Free: 1-877-268-5437

**Bismarck-Mandan**

216 2<sup>nd</sup> St N  
Bismarck ND 58501  
Phone: 701-328-5000  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0981

**Devils Lake**

301 College Dr S  
Devils Lake ND 58301  
Phone: 701-662-9300  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0982

**Dickinson**

66 Osborn Dr  
Dickinson ND 58601  
Phone: 701-227-3100  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0983

**Fargo**

1350 32<sup>nd</sup> St S  
Fargo ND 58103  
Phone: 701-239-7300  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0985

**Fort Totten**

Spirit Lake Employment & Training Building  
405 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N  
Fort Totten ND 58335  
Phone: 701-766-1203

**Fort Yates**

Job Service Building  
Fort Yates ND 58538  
Phone: 701-854-7463  
Toll-Free: 1-800-757-6850

**Grafton**

927 12<sup>th</sup> St W  
Grafton ND 58237  
Phone: 701-352-4450  
Toll-Free: 1-800-321-7416

**Grand Forks**

1501 28<sup>th</sup> Ave S  
Grand Forks ND 58201  
Phone: 701-795-3700  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0986

**Harvey**

119 9<sup>th</sup> St W  
Harvey ND 58341  
Phone: 701-324-4552  
(Open M & Tu 8:30-5:00/Th 8:30-12:30 only)

**Jamestown**

429 2<sup>nd</sup> St SW  
Jamestown ND 58401  
Phone: 701-253-6200  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0988

**Minot**

3416 N Broadway  
Minot ND 58703  
Phone: 701-857-7500  
Toll-Free: 1-800-482-0017

**New Town**

Main Lanes & Café Building  
204 Main St  
New Town ND 58763  
Phone: 701-627-4390

**Oakes**

517 Main Ave  
Oakes ND 58474  
Phone: 701-742-2546  
(Open M through Th 8:00-5:00/Fri 8:00-noon)

**Rolla**

103 E Main Ave  
Rolla ND 58367  
Phone: 701-477-5631

**Valley City**

250 S Central Ave  
Valley City ND 58072  
Phone: 701-845-8860  
Toll-Free: 1-800-831-6374

**Wahpeton**

524 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave N  
Wahpeton ND 58075  
Phone: 701-671-1500  
Toll-Free: 1-888-671-9229

**Williston**

422 1<sup>st</sup> Ave W  
Williston ND 58801  
Phone: 701-774-7900  
Toll-Free: 1-800-247-0989